



Highlight (Scripture references and Introduction.)

The word 'meditation' can stir up a wide range of emotions or ideas. The reason for this is because so many today associate meditation with the New Age movement, yoga, or some other mystic religion. In some counterfeit religions meditation means something equal to emptying your mind and becoming one with yourself or nature. This is certainly not the biblical definition or practice of the spiritual discipline of meditation.

Donald S. Whitney, in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, points out that just because another counterfeit religion or people group adopt a Christian symbol or practice does not mean that believers should abandon that particular symbol or practice. "One sad feature of our contemporary culture is that meditation has become identified more with non-Christian systems of thought than with biblical Christianity" (Whitney, Wkbk, 30). For instance, some people groups have adopted the rainbow to symbolize something God never intended it to symbolize. In fact, God informs us in His word as to what the symbol is to mean. God intended the rainbow to be observed as a promise to never destroy living creatures from the earth by water (Genesis 9:13-17). This symbol is certainly misused today. But, because it is misused by some does not mean that believers should abandon this covenant of mercy that God has given to His children. To abandon this symbol is to abandon the gracious covenant of God.

In fact, just recently our own state, Alabama, has adopted a yoga program for our children's PE classes in the public schools. Supposedly in these yoga classes it will be illegal to introduce any Eastern philosophy or religious training. However, it is from these very non-Christian religions that yoga is derived and these classes will most likely consist of some form of meditation. By the proponents of Yoga's own admission, "Yoga is a collection of physical, mental and spiritual practices" (bbc.com/news/world-55957298). These practices were originally derived from religions like Hinduism. This writer cannot speak as to what will be taught in the meditation portion of these classes but it is a high probability that students will not be taught to meditate on God's word. The chances are that some form of non-Christian meditation will be utilized. Children will most likely be unknowingly subjected to the kind of meditation that is derived from a religion of mystic origin. All the while most parents will remain uninformed and unengaged in their child's education experience. You can see how the enemy will rob believers of a God-given activity by offering up a counterfeit to the biblical thing. Christians should not be fearful of the counterfeits but should possess a biblical understanding of meditation that is helpful to our Christian walk and that honors God.

So, today's lesson will explore the biblical definition of meditation, explore the purpose of meditation, and explore the practical application of meditation. Remember these lessons are about

spiritual disciplines. Meditation is a part of the spiritual discipline of Bible Intake. “Meditation goes beyond hearing, reading, studying, and even memorizing as a means of taking in God’s word” (Whitney, 47). This lesson’s specific purpose is to help believer’s learn to meditate on God’s word for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

▫ **Questions:**

1. When you hear the word ‘meditate’ what are some thoughts that come to mind.
2. Is there a difference in just having a thought about something and meditating on a thought? If so, how would you explain the difference?

Teachers: It might be helpful to know some background on meditation from some of the eastern religions. I would caution about diving in too deep. But as Christians we should know enough about other faiths that enables us to spot counterfeits when we see them. Most uninformed believe meditation originated in India several thousand years ago. Other people groups may utilize some form of meditation, but believers are able to point out that long before the others it was God’s word that declared to His people ‘blessed’ would be the person whose ‘... delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night’ (Psalm 1:2). Say to your participants that meditation is a biblical discipline that God gave to His children that they might experience His blessings. Christians should not fear nor neglect a God-given activity. To be fearful of or neglectful of meditation is to abandon God’s best intended for His children.

Explain (Context and Commentary for the Scriptures.)

Point 1: Defining Meditation on God’s Word

Read: Psalm 1:1-3, 4:4, 63:6, 77:6

Discuss: While some non-Christian religions use meditation for emptying the mind biblical and Christian meditation is about filling the mind. Biblical meditation by God’s people is always about His word, His ways, His wonder, and etc. Whitney defines biblical meditation ‘as deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture, or upon life from a scriptural perspective, for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer’ (Whitney, BK, 46).

Whitney has a great analogy for helping us understand the discipline of meditation. He suggests that meditation is like a cup of tea.

In this analogy your mind is the cup of hot water and the tea bag represents your intake of Scripture. Hearing God’s word is like one dip of the tea bag into the cup. Some of the tea’s flavor is absorbed by the water, but not as much as would occur with a more thorough soaking of the bag. Reading, studying, and memorizing God’s word are like additional plunges of the tea bag into the cup. The more frequently the tea enters the water, the more permeating its effect. Meditation, however, is like immersing the bag completely and letting it steep until all the rich tea flavor has been extracted and the hot water is thoroughly tinted reddish brown. Meditation on the Scripture is letting the Bible brew in the brain. (Whitney, BK, 47)

This is a great picture of meditation on God's word. It is not about emptying the mind, but about filling the mind with God's word. Believers are to fill their minds with the things of God so that it permeates every aspect of their life.

In the verses highlighted for this portion of the lesson the Bible is clear as to what is to be the source of meditation, God's word. However, for this portion of the lesson we should understand the depth of contemplation that is implied. Meditation is more than a quick glance or a passing thought. A proper definition or understanding of meditation must take into account the effects the thought or idea has on the one meditating. Whitney says the opposite of one who meditates on God's word is a 'forgetful hearer' (Whitney, BK, 53). Meditation lends itself as Whitney points out to understanding, application, and prayer (Whitney, Bk, 46-47).

❖ **Further Commentary.** A study of a Strong's concordance provides us the meaning of the word 'meditate' in the Hebrew and Greek language. The Hebrew word for meditate is 'hagah'. This word has several meanings. It can mean to murmur, mutter, or even moan with a low voice. With respect to meditation it is to murmur to oneself in a low voice. To meditate in this way is to be in such deep concentration over a thought that a person might be speaking those words or thought under their breath. To meditate on God's word is to muse or ponder deeply, carefully and thoroughly. The Greek word for meditate is 'logizomai'. The word means to reckon, count, compute, calculate, or to count over. The idea is to take into account, to make an account of, or to logically deliberate on an idea or thought. To adequately define this word you must take into account that there is a greater effort than usual to process the idea than normal. The person would be doing more than just processing the knowledge. The person would be putting in more effort to understand the personal implications of an idea or thought.

□ **Questions:**

1. In some non-Christian religions meditating means to empty the mind. How does biblical meditation differ from this meaning?
2. What are some of the difficulties of meditation?
3. Why do you think it is important to some truth about God?
4. What might be a sign that we have not meditated on the things of God?

Point 2: The Purpose of Meditating on God's Word

Read: Joshua 1:8 and 1 Timothy 4:7, 12-16

Discuss: What a wonderful thing it must have been for God to speak to Joshua. Joshua Chapter 1 begins with the death of Moses and God speaking to Joshua. God makes Joshua two promises in verse 8. Both of these promises are directly related to whether or not Joshua would meditate on His word. If Joshua would meditate on the 'Book of the Law' God would make Joshua's way prosperous and would cause him to have good success. Honestly, today this sounds like the promise of health and wealth. But believers must remember that success and prosperity with God does not have us at the center. The promises that God gave to Joshua were concerned with Joshua being obedient to the will of God. Joshua's task was to lead the children of Israel in conquering the land

that He had given to them. God promised that Joshua would be prosperous and successful in this task if he would meditate on God's word. Today, our promised land is our salvation. As believers we are learning to walk victorious as saved believers. No longer are believers in slavery to sin, but have been set free to live obedient Christ-like lives. The spiritual discipline of Bible-intake and meditating on what we have heard, read, and studying will make us prosperous and successful in our pursuit of godliness. The purpose of meditation on God's word is the same as is any of the spiritual disciplines, a life of godliness.

Again, what wonderful thing it must have been for God to speak to Joshua. Truthfully, God speaks to us just the same. His word is living and powerful. His word is also fruitful in our lives. Many of the references to meditating on God's word speaks to the benefits that meditation brings to the believer's life. Psalm 1:1-3 speaks of the blessedness, fruitfulness, sureness, and prosperity that comes from meditating on God's word. 1 Timothy 4:7, 12-16, speaks to the benefit of spiritual maturity that comes from meditating on God's word. The meditation of God's word proves to be beneficial to the one who is pursuing godliness as their goal.

Another blessing God promises to those who meditate on the right things is His presence. The Apostle Paul told the Philippians if they would meditate on the right things then God Himself would be with them (Philippians 4:8). Believers should take note that communication and communion with God seems to be directly related to the believer's meditation on the good things of God.

❖ **Further Commentary.** Teachers, lead your participants to think about the blessings of God. Discuss the benefit of God's word found in Romans 12:2. Paul says the believer must not be 'conformed to this world', but should 'be transformed by the renewing of your mind'. How does meditation on the spiritual truths of God aid in the renewing of the believer's life?

□ **Questions:**

1. What is the difference between the world's definition of prosperity and success and that of God's?
2. Why is it important that we understand the way God defines prosperity and success?
3. How is that meditating on God's word leads to fruitfulness in the believer's life?

Point 3: How do we meditate on God's word?

Read: Psalm 119:97-104 and James 1:25

Discuss: This is probably true of most everything. Sinful man can take most good things and find a way to use it for bad. YouTube is no different. It can be used for both good and bad. Personally, I probably watch more 'how to' videos on YouTube than anything else. If I am trying to fix something around the house I often turn to YouTube for the answer. Most likely if you can think of it someone has put a 'how to' video so that we can learn how to do something. Bible study is no different. Most people might just need to be shown 'how to' and then they will know how to implement something into their lives as well. Whitney in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* identifies 17 different methods for meditating on Scripture. These methods are not all inclusive and this portion of the lesson will not be all inclusive either. However, the purpose of this portion of the lesson is to

explore some tools that will lead you as a believer to be a doer of God's word not just a hearer (James 1:25). This portion of the lesson is more on the practicality of meditation. How do we meditate on God's word?

Meditation begins with the word of God. You must choose a specific passage of Scripture or even a verse. It may be a verse that pertains to something you are currently dealing with or it may be a passage you have chosen to read as your quiet time with the Lord. Personally, I believe it is not always appropriate to read just those passages that pertain to what you are specifically going through because God is not all about you but about Himself, the Kingdom, and His will for your life. So, the believer has the whole counsel of the Bible that God may want to speak to His children about (2 Timothy 3:6-17). Personally, I almost never read the Bible without a pencil in hand and something to write on. As I meditate on God's word I am anxious and expectant to hear and learn from God. With Bible open, pen or pencil in hand, and something to write on you should exercise yourself in the discipline of meditating on God's word.

Here is the list of some of the meditation methods that Whitney provides: Emphasize different words or phrases in the text, rewrite the text in your own words, formulate the principle of the text in a sentence, try to visualize a picture that illustrates the meaning of the text, look for application of the text, ask whether or not the text points toward the Law or the gospel, ask how the text points to Jesus, ask what question does the text answer or what problem does the text solve, pray through the text, memorize the text, create a drawing that expresses the text, ask the Philippian 4:8 questions of the text—like what is true in the text - what is honorable about the text - what is just or right about the text - what is pure about the text- etc. (Whitney, Bk, 56-67). This are just a few meditation methods that Whitney suggests.

Personally, one thing I do as I meditate on God's word is to read and re-read the text. I try to discover the key verse of a passage as I read, or if a particular verse, phrase or word sticks out I underline the word. After I finish my read and re-read I go back to all that I have underlined and give deeper thought to these areas. Meditation takes spending time with God's word. What is the purpose of finishing a portion of Scripture and not knowing what or why you read that passage? Meditation takes time.

❖ **Further Commentary.** Teachers, lead your class to read Psalm 119:97-104 again with a pencil in hand. Have them mark verses in this passage that speaks to them. Allow them an opportunity to tell what this verse or verses mean to them. Have them re-read the passage and mark the word 'meditation' every time it appears. The questions below will cause us to look deeper into the word meditation.

□ **Questions:**

1. In Psalm 119:97 how long does the Psalmist say he meditates on God's law? What do you think that looks like for a believer today?
2. As you read through Psalm 119:97-104 what does the Psalmist say are the benefits of meditating on God's word.
3. What is the application of these verses to a believer's life?
4. Is there a verse in this scripture that you could commit to memory?

Application (What does God want me to do?)

Just like any discipline we must make a commitment to it. Just like physical discipline for the body we must set aside a specific and regular time for the exercise of spiritual disciplines as well. Philippians 4:8-9 emphasizes communion with God as a result of meditation on God's word. What an opportunity we have to spend time with the holy Creator of the universe.

Respond (What specific commitment will I make?)

What time will you set aside for the hearing, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on God's word? You will not ever start if you put it off. So, write down the time you intend to start. Make a commitment to begin these disciplines in your life. If you need to verbalize this commitment then express your commitment to one of the pastors or to someone that can hold you accountable for your commitment.

Additional Study Resources

1. Additional Bible Study tools are available at www.biblecc.com.
2. Additional Bible Study tools are available at www.biblegateway.com.
3. Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Donald S. Whitney, 2014.

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